

good way to skin the political communication research cat but that the mode of skinning matters. Different features of political language emerge depending on the theories that guide the investigation. The title of the book is a bit misleading because it promises more than is actually delivered. The collection encompasses neither a grand theory of political communication research nor a full array of the many forms that research has taken. Rather, the articles cover, in more or less detail, a limited array of important current theories and practices, drawn mostly from the realm of political rhetoric and linguistics. The focus is on the interface between the construction and interpretation of political messages and their effect on the conduct of politics.

The book begins with a densely written essay by political scientist David J. Lorenzo, who explains how literary theory and insights drawn from cultural anthropology can shed light on the motivations behind politicians' utterances. He thus reveals the systematic connection between the broader political culture and the rhetoric of political leaders. After reviewing the salient literature and models, Lorenzo demonstrates how analysis based on literary theory and cultural concerns can proceed. He uses as an example a speech by Ronald Reagan, who was then supporting the presidential candidacy of Barry Goldwater.

A brief survey of assorted verbal analysis theories follows. Speech communication expert Kenneth Hacker romps through various intellectual thickets, such as discourse processing, political and cultural linguistics, and semiotic analysis. He points out that language is an important instrument of control for the powerful that the powerless need to master. Students of the work of Murray Edelman will not be surprised. Somewhat later in the volume, Henry Kenski, whose credentials encompass both political science and speech communication, closes the methodological circle by recommending a multimethod approach to political communication research. He illustrates his recommendations with examples drawn from the study of policy issues using various perspectives to elucidate message framing and effect. The chapter contains explicit directions for a very useful content analysis design. If other scholars adopt it, it could bring some much-needed uniformity to the study of policy issue framing. The possibilities for comparative analyses would then be vastly enhanced.

Several essays focus on the particular verbal images that are created in various political contexts. Among my favorites is Bethami Dobkin's analysis of the clashing interpretations given to the widely publicized videotapes of the beating of Rodney King by Los Angeles police officers. Dobkin, a speech communication expert, explains why the framing given to the visuals by the news media aroused such widespread revulsion in most Americans, who interpreted the story as an inexcusable example of police brutality committed by white officers against a helpless black victim. This analysis is followed by an insightful account of the masterful verbal framing constructed by the police officers' legal defense team to structure the situation so that it convinced a jury the beating was justified and conformed to appropriate police procedures.

Another favorite essay is political scientist G.R. Boynton's account of the framing of the story of civil strife in Cambodia from November 1990 to September 1993. Boynton shows how the choice of various metaphors shaped the meaning of the story in the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and in *Washington Post* news accounts. Much of the history of the conflict was reported in the news stories, but in scattershot fashion, which made it difficult for average readers to piece the historical context together. While Boynton's account

seems close to reality, an analysis by political scientists Francis Beer and Barry Balleck of the images used in the Gulf War debate seems farfetched. Beer and Balleck report on body metaphors contained in the Gulf War discussions. Such bodily concepts as balance or attraction, they contend, can be linked to such political notions as balance of power and alliances.

I was also intrigued by a down-to-earth account by political scientist Matthew Kerbel, who told of the trials and tribulations researchers face when they try to study how members of the press go about their business of producing news stories. It seems strange that professionals whose occupation calls for questioning people and intruding into their personal and professional lives are so reluctant to answer questions themselves or allow outsiders to observe their work. Given this Berlin Wall mentality, it is refreshing to receive pointers from Kerbel on how the wall might be scaled. Similarly, it is gratifying to learn from Roy Schwartzman's report about the usefulness of hermeneutics and critical theory to break through the mental barriers created by hate speeches—in his case Nazi racial rhetoric. Besides revealing the flaws of such rhetoric, the techniques can be used to prepare countervailing arguments.

Other essays in the book include a study of variations in the amount of time granted to candidates in presidential debates. Communication scholars Ronald Milafski and Jian-Hua Zhua report that various debate formats lead to substantial inequalities which may have significant political consequences. Two essays cover presidential rhetoric. The more context-oriented one, by political scientist Mary Stuckey, examines how rhetoric is influenced by the institutional characteristics of the presidency. She uses a model constructed from the work of Stephen Skovronek and Lloyd Bitzer to examine inaugural addresses. The other essay, by political theorist Andrew Valls, applies a social constructionist approach to political rhetoric. Valls reports on Ronald Reagan's depiction of African Americans and George Bush's description of the Gulf War to illustrate how language constructs reality, rather than merely reflecting it. While I found these contributions less interesting and useful than several essays mentioned earlier, this is undoubtedly a matter of personal preference. Any collection of essays is likely to evoke different reactions from various readers. All in all, editor Mary Stuckey deserves plaudits for assembling a diverse series of stimulating political communication studies that touch on numerous interesting issues and demonstrate the utility of various research traditions. Although the essays do not break much new ground, they widen existing paths and open up fresh vistas on the research landscape. That is a worthwhile contribution.

**Constitutional Politics in the States: Contemporary Controversies and Historical Patterns.** Edited by G. Alan Tarr. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1996. 223p. \$59.95.

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Few people are interested in what state constitutions say, how they are amended, or how state supreme courts interpret them. This includes political scientists. Although my research focuses on the U.S. Supreme Court and I teach courses in constitutional law and civil liberties, I barely have a clue as to what my state constitution provides. I will bet that most persons who read this book review are in the same foggy state of mind about their own state constitution's provisions or state judicial decisions interpreting them.

Nonetheless, state constitutional politics (amending and

interpreting the document) have received increasing interest in the past 25 years. One reason is the so-called New Judicial Federalism. As the Supreme Court lost its liberal majority in the Burger years and began holding the line or even retrenching on defendant's rights, state high courts with liberal majorities began interpreting their own constitutions to develop rights beyond those the Supreme Court found in the U.S. Constitution. Frequent reliance on state constitutions in some states to expand such rights led to serious law and order backlashes, most notably in California and Florida. California's chief justice, Rose Bird, suffered the electoral consequences, and Florida's chief justice, Ellen Barkett, almost did.

But more than criminal justice rulings have called attention to state constitutional politics. Since the 1970s almost half the state supreme courts have considered challenges to reliance on local property taxes as the primary funding source for the public schools. A dozen of them have ruled that the state constitution requires a major restructuring of school financing. (In 1972 the Supreme Court rejected such a challenge under the 14th Amendment's equal protection clause.) A half dozen or so supreme courts have struck down their states' sodomy laws as violations of state constitutional guarantees of liberty or privacy. (In 1986 the Supreme Court rejected an argument that sodomy laws violated such guarantees in the U.S. Constitution.) The latest rage in state constitutional politics is term limits. Since 1990 more than twenty states have amended their constitution to limit legislators' terms. (Many also tried to impose term limits on their members of Congress, but the Supreme Court held this unconstitutional in 1995.)

Thus, several books on various aspects of state constitutional politics have appeared in the last decade. Moreover, Greenwood Press (under Alan Tarr's editorship) is producing a book on each state's constitution—its background, its interpretation, and the controversies surrounding it. *Constitutional Politics in the States* is a nice addition to this growing literature. Among its eight chapters are three cross-state commentaries and five that focus on particular states.

The most comprehensive of the cross-state analyses is Donald Lutz's examination of the frequency of state constitutional amendment. He shows, among other things, that frequency is strongly related to length and negatively related to the duration of state charters. He also develops a scale of difficulty for amending constitutions and finds, not surprisingly, that amendments occur more often when constitutions are easier to amend (also see Donald S. Lutz, "Toward a Theory of Constitutional Amendment," *American Political Science Review* (June 1994):355–70). John David Rausch, Jr., describes the term limit phenomenon. He argues, not entirely convincingly, that this is not the mass movement it appears to be, but a movement run by elites. He focuses on campaign strategies in four states (Oklahoma, Washington, Michigan, and Florida) to support his thesis. The other cross-state chapter is an historical review by Alan Tarr of state constitution making and amendments. It is short, not intended to be comprehensive, and serves as an initial background chapter for the book.

Two of the particularly focused chapters examine California's "counterrevolution" (to use Barry Latzer's term), namely, the 1982 addition of Proposition 8, titled "Victims' Bill of Rights," to the state constitution by a 56% majority. This title is a misnomer, as Candace McCoy points out in her chapter analyzing the amendment. Its main provisions required the state courts to interpret the state constitutional guarantees against unreasonable search and seizure and compelled self-incrimination in the same way as the Supreme

Court interprets the parallel provisions in the U.S. Constitution. No more judicial federalism here. Latzer's chapter discusses the California Supreme Court's liberal decisions that provoked the counterrevolution (and the 1986 defeat of Bird and two other liberal justices).

In 1978 Florida added a right of privacy to its constitution by a 60% margin after it was defeated by a 70% margin in 1978. Rebecca Mae Salokar discusses the pitfalls of the first campaign and the smooth operation of the successful effort two years later. Gerald Benjamin and Melissa Cusa analyze the politics of amending New York's constitution over the last three decades. Finally, and interestingly, Tarr and Russell Harrison apply Gerald Rosenberg's (*The Hollow Hope*, 1991) conditions of successful judicial implementation to two New Jersey Supreme Court school financing decisions and find that it only partly explains variance in the decisions' effectiveness.

One lesson several of these studies teach is that, because it is relatively easy to amend state constitutions (compared to the U.S. Constitution), state politics invite the frequent and often successful use of this tactic. This is particularly true in the 17 states where the constitution can be amended by initiative, bypassing the legislative process. Such amendments are more likely to alter the political or social status quo. McCoy and to a lesser extent Rausch argue that the initiative empowers special interests rather than the general public. Colorado's antihomosexual Amendment 2 may illustrate this. There are some recent instances of economic interests (unsuccessfully) using the initiative, especially in environmental policy. This, of course, is the opposite of what Hiram Johnson and other early-twentieth-century progenitors of the initiative intended. They wanted a device to get around legislatures whose members were being bought and sold by railroad magnates and other financiers. But McCoy in particular stretches the concept of special interest rather far. Widespread anger at liberal criminal justice rulings or desire to ensure greater legislative turnover are hardly the type of special interests Hiram Johnson had in mind. In fact, he may well have approved these goals.

By contrast, in the 25 states where legislative participation in the constitutional amendment process is mandated (in eight states, amendment is possible through a convention), amendments are unlikely to upset the status quo. Benjamin and Cusa show this to be the case in New York.

*Constitutional Politics in the States* is skewed toward the politics of state constitutional amendment. It is less focused on the role of state supreme court interpretations in state politics. I say this as an invitation, not a complaint; one book cannot cover the entire waterfront. But it seems to me that the greater personnel turnover (compared to the U.S. Supreme Court) of state court justices and their more direct answerability to the electorate should make constitutional politics qua politics more interesting at the state than national level. A complementary volume awaits us.

This book is a welcome addition to a thin literature. Except for Lutz's contribution, it is insufficient to support hypotheses or generalizations, but it is very suggestive of them and invites further and, I hope, broadly systematic work.

**Rivals for Power: Presidential-Congressional Relations.** Edited by James A. Thurber. Washington, DC: CQ Press, 1996. 267p. \$24.95.

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As a growing political science literature accustomed itself to a new, seemingly permanent partisan schism between the